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## PRESS RELEASE

## U.S. Department of Education Notifies Columbia University's Accreditor of Columbia's Title VI Violation

### ED OCR and HHS OCR Found Columbia University Violated Federal Civil Rights Law

JUNE 4, 2025

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) today notified Middle States Commission on Higher Education (the Commission) that its member institution, Columbia University, is in violation of federal antidiscrimination laws and therefore fails to meet the standards for accreditation set by the Commission. Pursuant to President Trump's Executive Order, [Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education](#), the Department has an obligation to promptly provide accreditors with any noncompliance findings related to member institutions.

The Commission's "Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation" state that "a candidate or accredited institution possesses or demonstrates ... compliance with all applicable government laws and regulations." In light of OCR's determination, Columbia University no longer appears to meet the Commission's accreditation standards.

"After Hamas' October 7, 2023, terror attack on Israel, Columbia University's leadership acted with deliberate indifference towards the harassment of Jewish students on its campus. This is not only immoral, but also unlawful. Accreditors have an enormous public responsibility as gatekeepers of federal student aid. They determine which institutions are eligible for federal student loans and Pell Grants. Just as the Department of Education has an obligation to uphold federal antidiscrimination law, university accreditors have an obligation to ensure member institutions abide by their standards," **said U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon**. "We look forward to the Commission keeping the Department fully informed of actions taken to ensure Columbia's compliance with accreditation standards including compliance with federal civil rights laws."

On May 22, 2025, the Department of Education's OCR and the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights (HHS OCR) determined that Columbia University acted with deliberate indifference towards the harassment of Jewish students, thereby violating Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Specifically, OCR and HHS OCR found that Columbia failed to meaningfully protect Jewish students against severe and pervasive harassment on Columbia's campus and consequently denied these students' equal access to educational opportunities to which they are entitled under the law.

Under 34 C.F.R. § 602.20(a), accreditors are required to notify any member institution about a federal noncompliance finding and establish a plan to come into compliance. If a university fails to come into compliance within a specified period, an accreditor must take appropriate action against its member institution.

**Background:**

On February 3, 2025, OCR initiated a [directed investigation](#) of Columbia University to examine whether the University discriminated against, enabled the harassment of, or tolerated violence against students and faculty on the basis of their Jewish ancestry in violation of Title VI and its implementing regulations.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal funding from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

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